

# ARCHITECTURE IN THE ALETHOSPHERE:

A Zoom Symposium Sponsored by the Institute for Psychoanalytic Studies in Architecture (iPSA)

“It is thus certain that all space we have knowledge of is not empty, but rather is filled with ether, the substance capable of propagating waves.”

—Heinrich Hertz

Psyche is extended, knows nothing of it.

—Sigmund Freud

Prominent among the features that distinguish the power-knowledge nexus established by what the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan called “university discourse” is the historically unprecedented collusion between science and capitalism that it entails. According to Lacan, this collusion has given rise to a new environmental condition. Lacan’s description of that condition conveys with remarkable prescience many features of the new media ecologies that today constitute our “post-human” sensorium, the so-called internet of things. As he observes, the result of this capitalistic inflection of the scientific enterprise is “not to have introduced a better and more extensive knowledge of the world but to have brought into existence, in the world, things that did not in any way exist at the level of perception.”

Two things are noteworthy about this statement. First, science on this account is a form of knowledge that does not reflect reality, as a thought might a being; rather, science, modern science, science under the sign of capitalism, brings new things into being; it is operative rather than reflective, a hammer not a mirror. The second noteworthy dimension of this description of modern science is that the true things that science brings into being in this fashion arrive in an ontological register and at a cosmological scale that eludes the human animal’s native powers of perception. At its most catastrophically creative, science operates at the level of the imperceptible, the invisible waves that it channels and modulates, but also the genes that it splices and the atoms that it splits. The things brought into existence in this fashion represent a new object- type emblematic of a new kind of materialism predicated on novel forms of symbolic practice and unheard forms of libidinal investment. The Ur-type of this virtual or immaterial object is on his account “the wave”:

As I was saying the other day on the steps of the Pantheon, the world that is assumed to have always been ours is now populated, in the very place where we are, without you having the slightest suspicion of it, by waves. This is not to be neglected as the manifestation, existence, presence, of science, and to describe what is around our Earth would require that one not be satisfied with speaking of atmosphere, stratosphere, of whatever you would like to spherize, however distant the particles we would apprehend.

—Jacques Lacan. “Furrows in the Alethosphere,” *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*

“Architecture in the Alethosphere,” aims to essay the explanatory power of Lacan’s comments concerning the alethosphere and those “lathouses” that are its objective

correlatives for considerations of architecture in its current condition. This aim has two vectors. The first seeks to forge links between the alethosphere and the constellation of broader themes that animate *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, viz.: the novel alliance between science and capitalism that emerges with the transition from thermodynamic to cybernetic models of industrial enterprise; the diminishing significance of the Oedipal impasse in the subjectivation of contemporary individuals and the resultant decline in the prevalence of neurotic structure (with its associated dialectic of desire and repression); the replacement of this neurotic culture of desire by a culture of consumerist enjoyment, and with that replacement, the emergence of new psychical dispositions sharing certain features with, while nevertheless remaining irreducible to, traditional formations of perversion and psychosis.

The second vector tracks the ways in which these transformations have altered our relationship to the built environment and its collective occupation. Relevant lines of investigation might include: the transformation in our relationship to built space that has resulted from the virtualization of social congregation (a transformation that has of course been immeasurably accelerated by COVID-19); the simultaneous eclipse of both public and private life; alethosphere and the new media ecologies associated with the anthropocene; architecture's agency in the consumerization of public experience; the particular liaison between science and capitalism that has attended the shift from industrial to information capital and its relationship to the financialization of the global economy; remote sensation and the altered calibration of perception and consciousness that it implies; architecture and the new attention economies; architecture and "ordinary psychosis"; the automation of intellectual labour and its implications for the design process; the aesthetics of the immaterial and imperceptible; and the future of architectural education in the 'new university'.

Scholars, architects, and clinicians interested in participating in the symposium should submit a proposal for a 30 to 60 minute presentation. Proposals may be submitted to Andrew Payne at [paynea1958@gmail.com](mailto:paynea1958@gmail.com). Following the review process, selected panelists will then be asked to participate in the following five stage process (the dates of which may be subject to minor alteration):

Pre-State: submit one-page proposals to Andrew Payne by June 30, 2021.

- Stage One: Zoom I: July 30: All participants met for an informal meeting (four hours) to become acquainted with one another and to pursue various lines of thought around the alethosphere. That meeting will be recorded and presented to two external critics for comments and suggestions.
- Stage Two: Zoom II: August 30: All participants will meet for a second informal meeting with the critics at which they will enjoy the benefit of the critics' observations and suggestions.
- Stage Three: September 30: all participants will upload their formal presentations to Youtube so that it is available to other panelists and eventually interested audience members. (Participants who are uncomfortable uploading material to Youtube may simply share their presentations with other panelists via email.)
- Stage Four: September 15: All participants will familiarize themselves with the uploaded presentations of the other panelists by this time.
- Stage Five: Zoom III: September 15: The Symposium: The symposium proper will unfold in four stages. Panelists will be accompanied by a moderator and a critic: at the first stage, each panelist will offer a 15-30 min. summary of their uploaded presentation; at the second stage, the critic will pose two or three questions to which each panelist will have an

opportunity to respond; at the third stage, discussion will be open to the audience, who may then pose questions to the panelists.

All interested panelists may subsequently submit their presentations for inclusion in a theme issue of the IPSA online journal, *Psyche Extended*.v